



The Roost

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2005

Letter from the President

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HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
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2005

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Dear Members:

As I write this, the icicles are thick and the gutters frozen - 2005 has come in with a vengeance! But looking back on 2004, the Irvington Historical Society had a wonderful year. Our programs were very well attended and what a great selection - talks on Hudson River School painter, Sanford Gifford, the ships that traveled the Hudson River; the Major Andre/Benedict Arnold controversy and the story of Briarcliff Lodge; a gathering with our senior citizens; and Bob Connick's Part II history of Dublin (see page 3).

The McVickar House Building Fund contributions and pledge payments for 2005 totaled \$87,000. Although progress on the house slowed up during the summer months, it is moving along now. The chimney was rebuilt, the roof fitted with a special fiber, and the heating, sprinkler and plumbing systems have been contracted out. The wonderful addition of the bargeboards, often called gingerbread, added great charm to this little treasure on Main Street.

I am pleased to announce that we have received two \$5,000 grants from New York State through the office of Assemblyman Richard Brodsky. One grant will go toward computers and the other toward office furnishings for the Historian and Curator.

Our work with the fourth grade students included sessions on Native American Indians and Hendrick Hudson. More fourth grade classes are planned, as well as a walking tour of the village for the fifth grade students.

The introduction of our 2005 Historical Society Calendar was a big hit! Thank you for your support. We are already working on the 2006 calendar.

I know you will enjoy this issue of *The Roost*. From cover to cover it illustrates how active we are. Your support as members and as contributors allows us to move forward in so many important directions. As our motto goes, "A Village that cares about its Future is devoted to its Past." Thank you all.

Betsy Griggs Wilson

*President of the Board of Trustees,
Irvington Historical Society*

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The Curator's Corner

By Barbara Sciulli

Every Tuesday morning, a dedicated group of volunteers organize and catalog the vast and varied collection of the Society.

Judy Beiss is cataloging the postcard and photo collection and has organized the obituaries of local residents that have been collected over the years. She also arranged for the acquisition of the United States and New York Census for the society (see her article on page 9), and donated a Macintosh computer for their use.

Joan Lobdell, our treasure hunter, surveys, sorts and writes an index for each box of materials. She removes the fragile, original material and sets it aside for special handling. Last week, she found the 1778 Last Will and Testament of John Riddle, a Barber ancestor, in an envelope with several 1905 letters to Santa Claus.

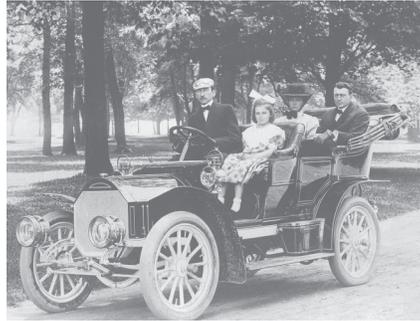


Joan Lobdell, left, and Judy Beiss sorting original documents at the Society's Archives.

Susan Robinson, a librarian on sabbatical, catalogs and prepares books for the Society's library that she has recently reorganized.

Peter Oley, Historian for the Village of Irvington, is always interested in our discoveries, and often uses the information in his research. Much of what we do resembles a puzzle—each piece bringing its own unique addition to the whole.

The Barber/Stevenson family donation is the current focus of attention at the Irvington Historical Society Archive. This material includes accounts of Amzi Barber's development of asphalt for paving roadways, and his purchase, in 1902, of the Locomobile Comopany.



The Davis Family, Lorena (Barber's daughter), and her husband, Samuel, in the rear seat and their daughter, Irene, in front, seated in an open touring car manufactured by the Locomobile Company. The identity of the driver is unknown.

Also included in this collection are the letters and records of the Lorena Company which was responsible for the development of Ardsley Park; documents concerning the establishment of the Ardsley Country Club; and receipts, diaries, photos, letters and keepsakes of many generations of the family.



Julia Louise Langdon Barber was the wife of Amzi Lorenzo Barber who was known as the "Asphalt King." The ermine cape that she is wearing in the photo is now part of the Society's Barber collection.

We feel privileged to have the responsibility of preserving the materials from a family that has contributed so much to our community.

Sunrise at the Crossroads

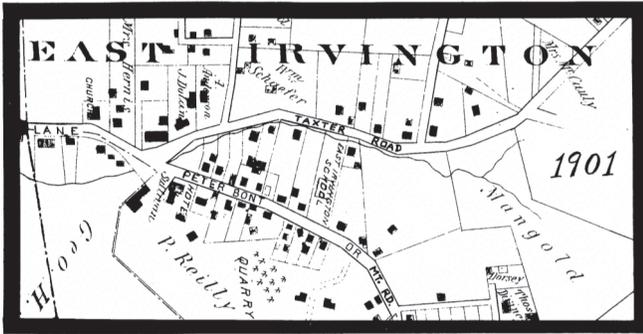
By Bob Connick

When I was about ten years old, I asked my mother, "What nationality am I?"

"Why do you want to know that?" she asked.

"The kids in school say they're Irish or English or Italian or Polish or even Slovakian and when they ask me I say, 'I don't know.'"

Quickly, she said, "You're Irish, English, French, German and a little Indian." And so, that's what I believed I was. I was particularly glad to hear that I was part Indian.



I grew up in a part of Irvington called Dublin. Today most people know this area as East Irvington, but when I was growing up there in the 30's and 40's, it was never called that. It was called only Dublin.



Its
The center of Dublin was the crossroads, the intersection of Sunnyside Lane, Taxter Road and Mountain Road (then called Peter Bont Road).

name came from the many Irish immigrants who settled there in the late 19th century. One of those immigrants was a young man named Patrick Connick, a farmer from Ireland. He was my Great Grandfather. In a lot of ways Patrick Connick's story

reflects that of many in East Irvington - a young man who emigrated from his native land to come to America and make a new life for himself and his descendants.

Patrick Connick, the son of Richard Connick and Eliza Ralph, was born on October 21, 1825 in Bolinaspic, County Wexford, Ireland. When Patrick was 24, one of the worst disasters in world history, the Irish Potato Famine, was at its peak. Between 1845 and 1849, one million people died of starvation. Emigrants by the hundreds of thousands sailed to America and Canada. Patrick decided late in 1849 to leave Ireland and come to America, arriving in New York on December 18, 1849.

His baptismal records were the only records found that confirmed his birth and the names of his parents and sponsors. No other information has been uncovered regarding his parents or two brothers.

Patrick was more fortunate than most who emigrated during this period. His ship was larger and more seaworthy. Many sailed on vessels called "coffin ships." They were small and overcrowded, and lacked the necessary sleeping accommodations. They had poor, if any, sanitary facilities, and shortages of food and water caused widespread disease and death.

Patrick was also fortunate to be sponsored by a Mr. Lawler from Dobbs Ferry who agreed to be responsible for him while he was in the country. While living in Dobbs Ferry, he met and courted Catherine Walsh and on April 15, 1853 they were married in St. Mary's church in Yonkers. Their son, Richard, was born in 1854, and a daughter was born in 1857.

Scouting around the area, Patrick came upon an acre of land on East Sunnyside Lane that he purchased for \$220 from Henry and Caroline Phinney. In 1864, he borrowed \$500 from John Mann, a friend and neighbor, to build a home on the site. On March 13, 1864, he paid a Mr. Bennett \$142 for carpentry work done on the house.

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Sunrise At the Crossroads, continued
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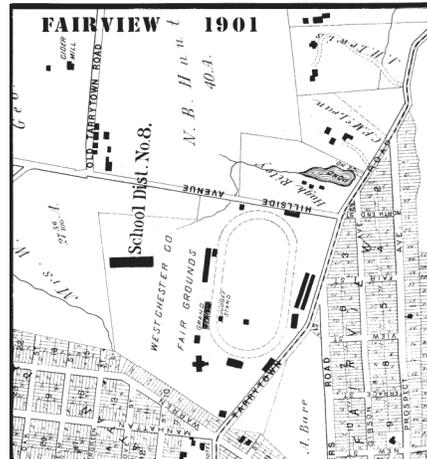
The Connick home as it appeared in 1890.

Mann Family

John Mann was a relative of Mike Mann head of one of the oldest families living in this area. An 1852 map shows only about 15 families lived here and there was only a dirt roadway which ran from Washington Irving's home on the Hudson River east to the Saw Mill River. The Mann's extensive land holdings were part of District two in the town of Greenburgh. Their family farm was one of the last in the area. Some pictures from the early 20th century show the Mann cows heading for the barn on a dirt road called Mountain Avenue (also called Peter Bont Road).



Sid Mann, shown above, was another member of the Mann family. Sid Mann owned and trained twenty-seven racing horses.



This map shows the location of the Fairgrounds. The trolley along Tarrytown Road provided convenient transportation to and from this section of Greenburgh at the time.

It is thought that Sid Mann raced these horses at the Westchester County Fair ground that was nearby in Fairview. Horse races, prize fights, circuses and baseball games were commonly held here from 1886 until 1922.

Richard Connick

On April 4, 1874, Patrick Connick died of small Pox at the age of 49. Twenty-three days later his daughter Mary also died, at the age of 17. Patrick was buried in the Old Civil War section of the Sleepy Hollow cemetery in Tarrytown.

Four years after Patrick's death, his son, Richard, my grandfather, who was 24 at the time, married Rose Kenny of North Tarrytown. My grandmother was born in North Tarrytown on January 1, 1856. She was one of seven children. Her father, John Kenny, was born in Ireland in 1816. He immigrated to New York from Dublin, Ireland aboard the ship Perseverance on May 18, 1846. Richard and Rose had 6 boys and 1 girl. It is believed that the girl died as an infant after falling out of a high chair.

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Sunrise at the Crossroads, *continued*

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The Chapel

In the 1870's there were 3 churches and two Presbyterian mission chapels, one at Dublin, the Irish settlement, and the other in Pennybridge. The old chapel on East Sunnyside Lane was one of the most important buildings in the area. The history of this little building which stands on the north side of the lane, goes back to 1870 when it was erected as a private chapel on land donated by the late Edward S. Jaffray. Known as the "Union Mission of East Irvington", it was owned privately by Miss Florence Jaffray, daughter of Edward, who later became Mrs. John R. Woodriff mother of the late Miss Betty Woodriff, well known for many years as Irvington's librarian.



The Sunnyside Chapel with its bell tower as it appeared in the 1940's. Over the years it has served as a chapel, a community center and the VFW Hall. Today the chapel is privately owned and used as a residence.

An interesting sidelight in its early history was the fact that on July 2, 1881, President James Garfield was on his way to Irvington to visit his friend Cyrus W. Field on what is now known as Cyrus Field Road, when he was assassinated, and that special services for him were held next day in the little chapel.

In 1905, Mrs. Woodriff turned the chapel over to the full ownership of the Irvington Presbyterian Church, and for the next 15 years, regular services were held there. Some years after that, the "Sunnyside Community House" was organized by residents of East Irvington and leased the chapel building for its meetings. In 1945 the Irvington Presbyterian Church signed over the deed to the chapel property to Mrs. Raymond Foster, president of the

"Community House". It later became the "East Irvington Community Club" and remained as such until 1956 when it was turned over to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It was resold in 1984 and is presently a private residence.

Great Estate Era

The late 1800's and early 1900's was known as The Great Estate Era. Major estates ran on both sides of Broadway from the Tarrytown line on the north to the Dobbs Ferry line on the south. In the Dublin/East Irvington area most of the large estates ran from Broadway to Peter Bont Road (Mountain Road) and the Saw Mill River Parkway. An extraordinarily able group of businessmen, political figures and professional men were moving from New York City onto the farmland acres and building magnificent homes with rolling lawns and landscaped gardens. Many of these men belonged to the Ardsley Country Club which opened in May 1896. It was the place where the socially and financially great throughout the East gathered. The members and officers included the likes of J. P Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Louis Tiffany, John D Rockefeller, Henry Villard, and Chauncey Depew to name a few. The members enjoyed the privilege of a golf course, lawn tennis courts, riding stables, and even a private dock for their yachts. In the winter, there were sleighing parties, toboggan slides, racing cars on the Hudson River when it was frozen. In the summer there was archery, croquet, garden and yachting parties. About 1880 tennis was brought in.

Although it was just a short ride from these estates to the Connick homestead, the grandeur and luxuries of the wealthy were radically different from the life style on East Sunnyside Lane. The 1905 census showed that Richard Connick's household consisted of Richard, head, 49, laborer; his wife Rose, 47, housework; his son, Richard, 26, coachman; his sons Patrick, 24 and John, 20, both listed as laborers; his sons Thomas, 15, and Joseph, 8, listed as "at school" and the youngest William, 3, listed as "home."

Sunrise at the Crossroads, continued

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They all resided at the original home that Patrick Connick had built in 1864, and had remained the same until around 1910. At this point, the kitchen, which had been in the basement, was moved up to an extension that was added to the left side of the house. Two separate rooms were on the first floor with a ladder going up to where all six boys slept in a loft. The ladder was replaced and stairs put in after my grandmother fell off the ladder.

It seems inconceivable today that one outhouse took care of all the family. The outhouse was located about midway between the house and the Sunnyside brook which ran from the top of Taxter Road to Washington Irving's home on the Hudson river.

The contrast between the two lifestyles was made tolerable, even acceptable, because both sides benefited. The wealthy's demand for domestic workers, groundskeepers, coachmen and craftsmen gave employment to an often little educated working class and those laborers allowed wealthy estate owners to enjoy their extravagant life styles. During this period, my uncle Richard was employed as one of the coachman at Ardsley Towers, built by Cyrus Field for his son and later owned by A L Barber. Another of my uncles, Thomas Connick was for many years employed by the Matthiessen estate as a chauffeur. He and his wife Veronica Crisfield Connick lived on the estate in an apartment.



Richard Connick II, shown here, was a coachman for Ardsley Towers the home built by Cyrus Field for his son.



Thomas Connick, a chauffeur on the Matthiessen estate, drove a much simpler horse and cart when at home in Dublin.

Geographical Changes

When Tarrytown became incorporated in 1870, they extended the town line to include all the property south to the middle of West and East Sunnyside Lane. When the Village of Irvington was incorporated 2 years later, they realized what had happened but unfortunately nothing could be changed. One of the major losses was Washington Irving's home which was part of the acquisition. The effects of the changes were shown on the 1872 Dublin map.

It is difficult to determine when the name Dublin became East Irvington. From looking at the the maps during this period, we learn that in 1872 when Irvington became incorporated, the name of this area was Dublin. The 1881 map showed the school district was now called East Irvington. While the name East Irvington continued to be used on the maps, the name "Dublin" seemed to be handed down until the early 40's. The area is now generally called East Irvington but fondly remembered as Dublin.

Education

Until 1855 there was a one room schoolhouse at Sunnyside Lane and Broadway (formerly called the Turnpike.) It was replaced by a new one-story brick building that was located south of Main Street on Broadway. In 1891, the East Irvington

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School was built to educate those children living past the last estate on East Sunnyside Lane. Students would attend this school thru the eighth grade. They were then sent to the high school in Irvington.

In 1925 a second floor was added, and the building accommodated all elementary school children until 1954, when overcrowding resulted in the construction of the Dows Lane Elementary School in Irvington. The East Irvington School was closed in 1970 and remained empty until sold in 1982. The old school house has been converted into condominiums but careful attention to preservation resulted in the addition of the building to the Register of Historic Places.

Our Move to Dublin

Joseph Bernard Connick, my father, was the next to the youngest of the six sons of Richard and Rose Connick. Born in 1897 at the homestead, he attended the new one-story East Irvington School on Taxter Road that had been built in 1891. He enlisted in the US Navy during World War I in 1918. In 1923 he courted and married Ella Foxwell at St. Mary's church in White Plains. They lived in Tarrytown for the first year and it was here that my sister, Virginia, was born. Soon after, they decided to become entrepreneurs and bought a chicken farm in Vineland, New Jersey. Unfortunately, it was just at the start of the depression years. Chicken feed prices became exorbitant within two years forcing them into foreclosure. They lost everything and returned to White Plains.

They found a basement apartment in a five-story building and agreed to become janitors for free rent. My mother took care of the tenants and my father tried to pick up odd jobs to survive. I was born there in 1926 and my brother was born in 1928. In 1929 the stock market crashed and in 1930 we moved to Dublin/East Irvington into my grandmother's house. The house was partially remodeled to accommodate everybody. My grandmother lived with us during the day and spent the night with her son William Connick who had built a Sears Roebuck Catalog house next door.

Life during the 30's

Life during the 1930's was difficult and bartering was a way of life. Horse and wagon peddlers went from house to house selling and buying clothing, furnishings and just about anything else people needed. Our "Junk Room" on an unfinished back porch became part of the buying and selling operation.

Our life style while simple never seemed meager. Everybody had jobs to do and whatever was on the table to eat--everyone ate. It was at this time that the large estates began breaking up or changing hands. Industries such as General Motors Chevrolet plant in Tarrytown hired people including my father for work on the assembly lines. Lord & Burnham and the Lumber yard on the Riverfront in Irvington, Anaconda Wire & Cable Co in Hastings and Alexander Carpet Co in Yonkers were offering men jobs. My father worked on the assembly line at General Motors. Working conditions were not very good, wages were low and second incomes were needed to survive.

Life in East Irvington began to change. People were more connected with the village and the surrounding areas. Families moved away and new families moved in. We were no longer the sheltered, close knit community we had been. But when I think back on those earlier days, I think of the words of my friend, Walter Peters:

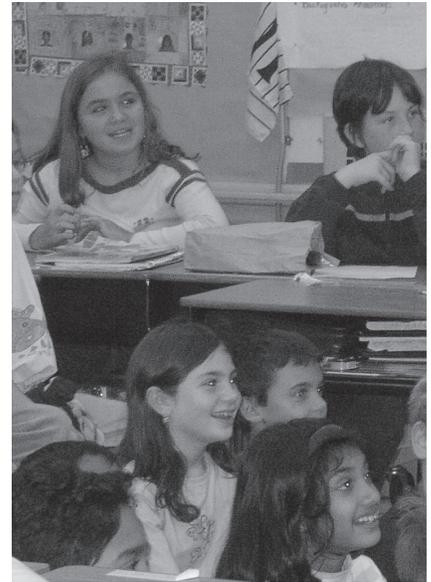
"Of all the things that were great about Dublin, it was the unfettered freedom in the woods that I most cherish, and to this day remember with nostalgia and happiness that it was once part of me. I would walk back deep into the woods and sit on a rock high over the road and look forever in every direction. Only the silence of the woods of the Dublin that nurtured me, did I hear. It belonged to me, and I to it. Dublin, its people, its closeness, its beauty, have influenced me throughout my life...It will forever be with me."

Bob Connick is a member of the Board of The Irvington Historical Society.

Fourth Grade Program— Henry Hudson



Henry Hudson (aka Doug Wilson) made a visit to fourth graders at the Main Street School. Students had an opportunity to hear Hudson recount stories about his voyages and his exploration of the Hudson River. Students also sampled hard tack, a staple of sailors on long voyages.



Fourth Grade Program— Native Americans



Many thanks to local collector and historian, Mark DiMicelli, for sharing his vast knowledge and artifacts of the Native American residents of this area to enrich the local history curriculum. The program explored the discovery, identification, dating and usage of various artifacts collected in Irvington and surrounding areas. Arrow and spear heads, axe heads, scrapers and other objects were on display. Some of these items were found in or near shell middens (refuse mounds) located on the banks of the Hudson River. At the close of the program, students examined the collection close-up and asked many interesting questions.

Irvington Census Data

By Judy Beiss

The Society has acquired all of the Irvington federal census data from 1880 to 1930*, the last year for which United States census materials are available. And, we have also acquired the appropriate Westchester, New York State census materials for the 1905, 1915, and 1925 surveys when the state stopped taking the census. The microfilm records for these years have been digitized and placed on a DVD in Adobe Acrobat pdf format and they are very easy to access and search. We began with the 1880 census as Irvington incorporated as a village in 1872 and that was the first year in which Irvington appears as a separate political entity rather than simply being listed as streets in Greenburgh.

In order to ease the use of these materials, I have begun indexing each census in its own pdf file. To date, we have indexes for the federal census and three New York Stat census surveys. I expect to complete the remainder this winter. I suggest that anyone wishing to view a given census should first consult the index for that census, make note of the pages they wish to see and then open to the appropriate census pdf. The process is delightfully easy.

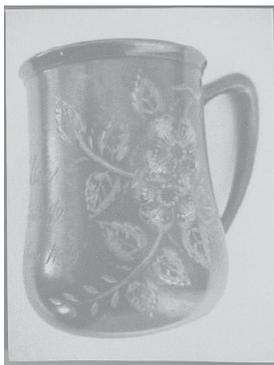
The materials are to be found on the iMac at the Society's Bridge Street archive. They will, of course, be more accessible once the McVickar House is completed and open for business. There is

a manual near the iMac which provides a brief, easy guide for starting up the iMac, shutting it down, and accessing and viewing the materials. There is also a guide for the census materials which includes copies of each US federal census questionnaire and the instructions issued to the enumerators for each survey. This material allows you to see what information each survey gathered, and where it is to be found on the page.

Finally, our census files for these surveys include most of Westchester. It is possible to view Greenburgh, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings, Tarrytown and more on each census. We plan to advise our sister historical societies in the county that we have this data. I expect this gold mine of information to attract a good deal of interest as it is possible to research not only ancestors and property, but a detailed image of the village can be constructed at precise points in time with respect to families, occupations, place of birth, etc. Once the McVickar House is open, all are welcome to explore this material.

*The 1890 census material was destroyed in a fire in Washington, DC in 1922 and is not available.

Judy Beiss is a member of the Board of the Irvington Historical Society.



Does anyone know Elsie?

This beautiful baby cup, a recent acquisition of the Society, is inscribed "Elsie born Sept. 20/92 Irvington, NY. We would love to know who Elsie was so if anyone has any idea, please call the Society at 591-0703.

Our gratitude goes out to all contributors to the McVickar House Building Fund Project. We would like to express our special thanks to those who made gifts of \$1,000 or more. Their names will be listed on a "Wall of Major Donors" plaque in the front hall of the house. We welcome any additional special gifts and would be pleased to add several more names to the plaque.

Wall of Major Donors

Additions to the Wall of Donors

(includes increases to original gifts)
McVickar House Building Fund as of February 2005

Very special thanks (Gifts from \$11,000 to \$60,000): In Memory of Adele Warnock from Mr. & Mrs. John Sanders

Special thanks (Gifts of \$2,000 to \$10,000): The Doyle Family, Mr. & Mrs. George Gravellee, Erna Kaufman & Joseph Lombardi, Pat Mulvey & Michael Cornman, Mrs. John Stimpson, S. Howard Warnock, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Toomy, Harriet Winslow Wheeler (memorial).

Additional thanks (Gifts of \$1,000): Mr. & Mrs. James Collins, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Howard L. Harmon, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Kelly, Gaetana Kramer, The Lillienfield Family, Mr. & Mrs. Louis Lustenberger, The Merryman Family, Betty Russell, Mr. & Mrs. Donald Seus, The Wenig Family.

The Society extends a special mention of thanks to Project Manager, Andy Lyons, Project Architect, Earl E. Ferguson and Project Fund Chair, Doug Wilson.



Irvington Historical Society Building Fund Donation/Pledge Card	
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____ (zip) _____	
Amount of Donation: \$ _____	
Amount of Pledge: \$ _____	#of payments: _____ Enclosed: \$ _____
Gifts of stock may be made. Please contact Betsy Wilson at (914) 591-2564	
Donations of \$1,000 and higher will be acknowledged on a plaque in the McVickar House. Donations are 100% tax deductible. Thank you for being part of this project. Make checks payable to: Irvington Historical Society Building Fund, P.O. Box 23, Irvington, N.Y, 10533.	

The Roost

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Submissions

The Irvington Historical Society is always looking for suitable material, whether historical essay or personal reminiscence, for *The Roost*. We believe that many of our members have information or stories that would be of interest to our readers. If you have a suggestion or idea for an article, please contact Pat Ryan, 591-7809, e-mail jppjryan@aol.com.

In addition, while every effort is made to insure accuracy, the Society cannot assume responsibility for statements made by contributors. 

Wish List

The Irvington Historical Society will be working with both the 4th and 5th grades next year. Projects will include classroom lessons on local history, life in earlier times, understanding original documents, and the Hudson river. Walking tours, the visit to the Hermit's grave and other activities are also planned. This is a very exciting (and extensive) project and we are looking for volunteers. If you have any time that you might be able to give, please call Pat Ryan 591-7809. 